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BOOK REVIEWS.

DAS DER MENSCHHEIT GEMEINSAME. Auch eine christlich-soziale Studie. By
Leopold Besser. Bonn: Emil Strauss. 1895. Pages, 119.

The utterances of this pamphlet are distinguished by considerable common sense, insight, and straightforwardness of presentation. The discussions relate mainly to Germany, but consider aspects of life and thought which are fundamental and which possess a significance for the reflective people of every nation. If not impregnable, the statement of the author's philosophical position is at least clear and simple; while in the application of his views he is eminently practical and constantly at the heart of the questions he seeks to solve. Whether his propositions are stated with sufficient definiteness to be put into immediate execution is another question, and one which is withdrawn from criticism by the fact that the author aims wholly at the formation of ideals. He contends that it is not so much the actual economic facts, such for instance as the glaring contrasts of poverty and wealth, etc., which cause the social and economic troubles of to-day, as the ideas and impulses which have hold of our brains. His purpose is to point out the way by which man can avoid falling a victim to superstition and transcendentalism, and to prevent the formation of ideas which destroy and poison the springs of life. One of these erroneous ideas is the traditional notion of religion. By "knowledge" the author understands inference from real experiences to causes which in their turn also are within the reach of real experience—i. e., perceptible by the senses; by "faith," on the other hand, he understands belief in inferences which presuppose causes *not* within the reach of experience. Now religion, man's feeling of his dependence on a power determining his life but beyond the reach of his sense-experience, belongs really in the latter category, whilst historically and actually it has been placed in the former. Hence, the innumerable clefts in human conduct and thought. Hence opposing parties have arisen whose differences can be composed only by the discovery and adoption of *Das Gemeinsame*—the common interests and the common possessions of man.

The author's discussions touching the way of practical social reform are based on the conclusions of biology, which discovers the sufficient and real ground of social existence in the triune fact of man, wife, and child as the social element of so-

ciety. The second and principal corollary of biology is the obligation devolving on parents of equipping the individual child with such capacities for labor as shall bring the rewards necessary for the maintenance of a proper human existence. To this end the family must possess property. On this point the author lays greatest stress; primarily he thinks the acquisition of earthly goods to be more necessary even than the acquisition of intellectual goods; the social question will find its solution only in the *individual reform* of the *laboring* individual. In this respect his views are opposed to communism and are centred in the idea of a high excellence of individual ability. It is the gospel of labor and *the just reward* of labor that he propounds—in which way alone man can pursue the noblest aims of life and fully participate in the common spiritual possessions of mankind—its knowledge, love, and justice.

There is a salutary and elevated vein of patriotism in the book, which is opposed to all clericalism and pins its faith on the house of Hohenzollern as having the power and the will to save Germany from its present social and spiritual distresses. The author quotes this sentence from his highest ideal of a princely ruler, Frederick the Great, as being the quintessence of all ethics and all Christianity—the real Sermon on the Mount. "Our life is a fleeting passage from birth to death. The mission of man during this brief space of time is to labor for the welfare of society, of which he is a part." One can well see that the author's words have, as he tells us, been written with "all the warmth of his heart's blood, at least with so much as age has left him" (it has left him much), and it is to be hoped that the best portion of what he has said shall neither be "decried," nor "silenced by disregard." T. J. McC.

PSYCHOLOGIE DES GLAUBENS. By *Gustav Vorbrödt*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht. 1895. Pages, 257. Price, M. 7.

This book insists upon the importance of psychology for religion. The author has unquestionably discovered the Archimedian *δὲς μοι πῶς στῶ* of theology, and convinced of the importance of his mission, addresses his book to the "hard-hearing" theologians, to professional psychologists, and to the enemies of religion. He has read Ribot, Binet, Wundt, and others with profit, and presents their views with fair accuracy. But while he apparently adopts some of the most striking results of modern psychology, e. g., as to the nature and origin of the ego (pp. 110–127) he retains, at the same time, some traditional notions of theological dogmatism that are irreconcilable with the new view. He goes so far as to speak of the personality of God, concerning which he says that it is absolutely independent of our planet, and it is wisest not to ponder on the subject, as it is conceivable that God's personality manifests itself under other than terrestrial conditions and in other ways. Any one who takes the allegory of God's personality seriously, will fall into gross misconceptions, which are but little less pagan than polytheism, for God is not an individual being, but is suprapersonal. God is not a great world-ego that loves his creatures, but God is (as Christ tersely expressed it) himself Love; God is not the maker of law